

## Cholera

### Introduction

The first case of cholera was reported in Britain in 1831. It is caused by a bacteria *Vibrio cholerae*, usually found in food or water contaminated by faeces from a person with the infection. It follows

that Victorian poor sanitation, overcrowding and questionable water supplies helped spread this disease. All these conditions were present in Malton in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

### Cases

Due to the crowded and insanitary conditions in the town there were instances of cholera. One family fell victim and all 3 had died within 3 days in 1849: Same day (17<sup>th</sup> August), at New Malton, aged 46, Elizabeth, wife of Mr. David Oxendale, after suffering from spasmodic cholera, 30 hours; on the 18<sup>th</sup> inst., at the cholera hospital, Malton, aged 2 1/2 years, from spasmodic cholera and consecutive fever, Rebecca, daughter of the above David and

Elizabeth Oxendale; and on the 19<sup>th</sup> inst., at the above hospital, aged 26, the above named David Oxendale, after suffering from diarrhoea 18 hours, and from Asiatic cholera [1] The coroner's inquest concluded that the wife and daughter had 'died from cholera brought on from want of sufficient food, through the neglect of David Oxendale, husband to the above' [2]

### Measures

On the 21<sup>st</sup> August 1854, Samuel Walker, Clerk to the Malton Union Committee of Health issued a notice in The Messenger regarding the recurrence of Cholera in various places throughout the country. They requested that householders would remove any nuisances from their premises and to check the state of drains, privies, ashpits, cesspools and piggeries to make sure they were in good order. They were also instructed to whitewash their dwellings with lime and to improve ventilation where possible. It was felt that these measures would prevent or check the progress of cholera and other diseases from spreading. [3]

An order of precautions against Cholera from Samuel Walker, Clerk to the Malton Union Committee of Health was published in the Malton Messenger in October 1854. The General Board of Health issued these warnings [4]:

Apply for medicine to stop loose bowels as it may bring on Cholera.  
Do not take any Strong Opening Medicine without medical advice.  
Excess in alcohol is likely to be followed by Cholera.  
Only drink boiled water that is clear and tastes well.  
Don't eat tainted or decayed meat, stale fish or raw vegetables and eat cooked vegetables and fruit in moderation.  
Avoid fasting and be moderate at meals.  
Avoid great fatigue and being heated and then chilled.  
Avoid getting wet and remaining in wet clothes.  
Keep your body and feet clean, dry and as warm as your means and occupation allows.  
Clean and lime wash your rooms removing any dirt or impurities.  
Open your windows as much as possible and remove any offensive smells with chloride, lime or zinc.  
If you know of any dust or dirt heaps, foul drains or smells or any other nuisance in your house or neighbourhood report immediately to the Board of Guardians, Committee of Health, or to the Relieving Officers of the Union

## Other Cases

Mary Wray died in the Malton Workhouse, aged 6, of the 'English cholera' 24<sup>th</sup> August 1852 York Herald, 28 August 1852

George Forster, At New Malton, on the 20th ult., of cholera, aged 52, cordwainer. York Herald, 2 December 1854

## References

[1] York Herald, 25 August 1849.

[2] Yorkshire Gazette, 25 August 1849

[3] Malton Messenger, 2 September 1854

[4] Malton Messenger, 5 October 1854